

Message Text

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SUBJECT: REACTION TO AP STORY ON GEISEL MEETING WITH
POLITICAL LEADERS

SUMMARY: AN AP REPORT ON A FRANK, HARD-HITTING
PRESENTATION BY PRESIDENT GEISEL TO POLITICAL
LEADERS IN A CLOSED MEETING WAS NOT CARRIED IN
BRAZILIAN PAPERS, BUT ITS APPEARANCE ELSEWHERE
HAS CAUSED A STIR HERE, WITH ADMINISTRATION FIGURES
ATTEMPTING TO DOWNPLAY THE STORY'S ASSERTIONS. THE
STORY'S AUTHOR, DAVID VIDAL, WAS SUBSEQUENTLY CALLED
IN BY THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S PRESS OFFICER FOR SOME
AGGRIEVED CONVERSATION, AND HE ANTICIPATES REFUSAL
OF THE RENEWAL OF HIS DOCUMENTATION. DENNIS
REDMONT, AP BUREAU CHIEF FOR BRAZIL, HAS BEEN REQUESTED
TO VISIT FOREIGN MINISTRY TO DISCUSS CASE. WE HAVE
ASKED VIDAL TO STAY IN TOUCH WITH US. END SUMMARY.

1. AP WRITER DAVID VIDAL HAS INFORMED US THAT ON
SATURDAY (FEB. 22) HE FILED A STORY WHICH BEGAN
"IN A HIGHLY RESERVED MEETING HELD AT HIS
RESIDENCE, PRESIDENT ERNESTO GEISEL OF BRAZIL
HAS PAINTED A GRAVE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PICTURE
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OF HIS COUNTRY'S IMMEDIATE FUTURE BEFORE A STUNNED

GROUP INCLUDING THE CABINET, 21 NEW STATE GOVERNORS AND THE LEADERS OF THE CONGRESS AND THE OFFICIAL NATIONAL RENEWAL ALLIANCE (ARENA) PARTY." (HE PROVIDED US FULL TEXT, POUCHED ARA/BR.) THE STORY, LACED WITH QUOTES OF GEISEL ATTRIBUTED TO PARTICIPANTS, HAS HIM CRITICIZING THE PAST TWO ADMINISTRATIONS, NOTING THREATS TO FOREIGN EXCHANGE LEVELS POSED BY EXPECTED DROPS IN RAW MATERIALS PRICES, CALLING FOR MORE EFFECTIVE POLITICAL ACTION, SUGGESTING CERTAIN POSTS COULD BE FILLED AT THE REQUEST OF POLITICIANS, AND DEMANDING COOPERATION WITH THE POLITICAL CLASS ON PAIN OF DISMISSAL. THE SOURCES ARE DESCRIBED AS CONSIDERING GEISEL'S PITCH A SIGN OF HIS DETERMINATION TO CONTINUE "DECOMPRESSION."

2. PRESUMABLY ACTING OUT OF PRUDENCE, BRAZILIAN PAPERS DID NOT (AS FAR WE CAN DETERMINE) USE THE AP STORY. WORD OF ITS APPEARANCE IN ARGENTINA'S LA NACION, HOWEVER, PROMPTED ADMINISTRATION FIGURES TO ATTEMPT TO DOWNPLAY IT, AND THEIR STATEMENTS WERE CARRIED IN THE IMPORTANT O ESTADO DE SAO PAULO OF FEB. 25, ALONG WITH A REFERENCE TO THE ORIGINAL AP STORY AND ITS APPEARANCE IN LA NACION. (VIDAL HAS FILED A REPORT ON THE ESTADO STORY, TEXT ALSO POUCHED ARA/BR.)

3. VIDAL TOLD US HE WAS CALLED IN BY THE FOREIGN MINISTRY PRESS OFFICER FOR SOME AGGRIEVED CONVERSATION. HE WAS SUBSEQUENTLY INFORMED THAT HIS ACCREDITATION WAS UNDER REVIEW, AND HE ANTICIPATES THAT THERE MAY WELL BE REFUSAL OF RENEWAL OF HIS DOCUMENTATION (BOTH HIS PRESS ACCREDITATION AND HIS VISA ARE UP.) DENNIS REDMONT, AP BUREAU CHIEF FOR BRAZIL, RESIDENT IN RIO DE JANEIRO, HAS BEEN REQUESTED TO VISIT FOREIGN MINISTRY TO DISCUSS CASE. AS A FURTHER SIGN OF THE STORY'S SENSITIVITY, VIDAL MENTIONED THAT TWO OTHER NEWSMEN, BOTH BRAZILIAN, GOT THE SAME INFORMATION HE DID BUT DID NOT USE IT. WE HAVE ASKED HIM TO STAY IN REGULAR TOUCH WITH US.

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4. COMMENT: GEISEL'S PITCH AS REPORTED BY VIDAL STRIKES US AS NOT SURPRISING IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, CLOSELY RESEMBLING A HARD-HITTING PEP-TALK BY A COACH TO HIS TEAM AS IT IS ABOUT TO TAKE THE FIELD (THE NEW GOVERNORS AND THE NEW CONGRESS BEGIN WORK IN MARCH.) IN PUBLIC, OF COURSE, THE ADMINISTRATION HAS BEEN GUARDED AND GINGERLY

IN SIGNALING THE POSSIBILITY OF ECONOMIC
DIFFICULTIES, TENDING TO ASSERT OVERALL OPTIMISM.
THE FACT THAT A LEAK OCCURRED AT ALL PROBABLY
STUNG AS MUCH AS THE CONTENTS OF THE STORY.
ALSO DOUBTLESS PAINFUL WAS THE CARTOON STRIP RUN
IN THE FEB. 26 JORNAL DE BRASILIA (THE EDITOR OF
WHICH, NORMALLY A FREE-SWINGING TYPE, TOLD US HE
WAS STAYING AWAY FROM THE STORY): AFTER NOTING
THE GEISEL'S SPEECH WAS KEPT FROM BRAZILIANS
BUT OPEN TO ARGENTINES, IT CONCLUDED, "NOW
FOREIGNERS CAN SAY, 'BRAZIL, CAPITAL BUENOS
AIRES'". END COMMENT.
CRIMMINS

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